

Treat or Trick?
Halloween in a Globalising World

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Edited by

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INTRODUCING HALLOWEEN

INTRODUCTION

MALCOLM FOLEY AND HUGH O'DONNELL

Introduction

As we write this Introduction in late October 2008 the Halloween season – at least a week before the event itself – is already in full swing. Supermarkets in the United States and Canada offer endless supplies of pumpkins, as do the smaller greengrocer's shops. The by now well-established signature colours of the impending eve itself, orange and black, can be seen everywhere – on sweets, cakes, toys, trinkets, crockery, even on fashions. Bats can be consumed in an amazing variety of forms: there are even bat-shaped cake-moulds and pastry-cutters for those of a more enterprising nature. Witches abound, as do skeletons, vampires and ghouls of all descriptions, spiders and black cats. In the more daring costume shops plastic halberds are on sale, along with tombstones and severed heads. And Europe is not far behind. Even in countries where ten or fifteen years ago Halloween was almost unheard of all of the above can be found in shop windows, often competing for (or, depending on your point of view, sharing) space with local delicacies associated with the more traditional All Souls and All Saints. Theme parks and historic castles offer Halloween specials for the children, with “adult” versions reserved for more mature clients after eight pm. No-frills airlines offer “spooktacular deals” while fancy-dress processions are organised through city centres, often attracting up to a thousand participants. Offices, schools, hospitals and old folk's homes are transformed appropriately. Breweries get in on the act with Guinness announcing the arrival of the “reign of darkness”. The scale of mobilisation across a wide range of (though, it should be stressed, by no means all) sectors of society is truly impressive: Google replaces the first “o” of its logo with a carved-out pumpkin lit from within. Even in a period of imminent recession business seems brisk. Halloween may be – indeed clearly *is* – many things, part (diminishing) religious observance, part (growing) locus of terrified fun for both children and adults – but its commercial dimension is also increasingly to the fore.

This book derives from a conference held in Glasgow Caledonian University on Halloween 2006. The organisers chose this topic precisely because they had become increasingly aware of the growing gap between the relatively scarce academic treatment of Halloween in the past (though there were some notable exceptions) and its ever greater importance as a key date in both the festive and the commercial year: one last chance for fun before the winter sets in, and a welcome business opportunity in the long haul from summer till Christmas and the New Year. But our attention had also been drawn to the irruption of Halloween in a wide range of European societies in which it had been previously almost entirely absent: despite opposition from many local organisations – both religious and secular – it had made spectacular inroads in France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries, as well as in Russia. Our Call for Papers quickly showed that we had tapped into an unexpectedly rich vein, with colleagues from over a dozen countries, from both sides of the Atlantic and from both within the academy and beyond, offering to talk about their experience of Halloween. This book is simultaneously a distillation and an expansion of their contributions to that conference.

Structure of the Book

This volume is divided into six sections, these bookended by an introductory section and a Conclusion. The overview offered in this Introduction is followed by a contribution from a colleague who is beyond any doubt the best known figure in academic analysis of Halloween to date, Jack Santino of Bowling Green State University, Ohio, the opening keynote speaker at our conference. His many publications on this topic include *The Hallowed Eve* (1998), a highly insightful analysis of how the festival of Halloween operated in the often strife-torn environment of Northern Ireland. In the opening chapter here he contrasts the celebration of Halloween in Northern Ireland and the United States as part of his overall argument for the sheer polysemy of the event, its astonishing ability to mean so many things to so many different (groups of) people – a feature in which it surely outperforms even Christmas, observance of whose religious origins has remained much more intact – a range of meanings which, however, cluster around a concrete ability to bring groups of people together, if not necessarily under a common agenda. He describes how Halloween in Northern Ireland was able – due to its apolitical nature in that particular part of the world – to bring together in a (more or less) common celebration communities which were for the most part otherwise divided. But, as a number of other studies in this volume

show, there is nothing essential about this. In other circumstances Halloween can divide culturally, religiously, generationally, even to some extent politically.

In the opening section, “Re(inventing) Halloween”, we bring together a number of studies on the possible origins of Halloween, and on how broader public awareness of at least some of these theories can impact on the reception of the festival in its current form in certain religious quarters, turning it into an object of considerable controversy, above all (though as some of the later chapters will show, not exclusively) in North America. Stephen Sayers examines the links between Halloween and (possibly pre-Christian) forms of Harvest Festival celebrated throughout Europe: as a number of our authors point out, the traditional presence of products such as apples, turnips, pumpkins and more exotic items such as monkey nuts in the main suggest the survival of elements of earlier harvest rites in the contemporary event. Robert Davis passionately defends Halloween’s origins in the religious observance of All Souls and All Saints, pointing to the spurious nature of much of the earlier research which claimed to demonstrate its pagan origins. The Reverend Fran Ota of Glen Ayr United Church in Scarborough, Ontario, Canada challenges conservative religious condemnations of Halloween as purely pagan or even somehow satanic, stressing the potential it offers not just for fun, but also for religious teaching. She demonstrated her real-life commitment to her views by coming to the conference dinner dressed as a witch.

In “Experiencing Halloween (1)” we present three studies of Halloween in those regions of the British Isles from which – despite the now almost universal replacement of the turnip by the pumpkin¹ – much of the morphology of its contemporary celebration clearly derives: Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man. These regions have quite legitimate claims to various depths of Celtic past. Though this Celticness is much attenuated in their contemporary forms of life – for example, of the three Celtic languages Scottish and Irish Gaelic are now spoken as a mother tongue by around one percent of their respective populations, while Manx had to be revived after disappearing entirely in the second half of the twentieth century – these claims were an important element in earlier theorisings of the Celtic origins of Halloween itself. Valentina Bold’s examination of descriptions of Halloween in the late eighteenth-century poetry of Lowland Scotland is challenging in a number of ways. Firstly, while it is clear that the form the celebrations took at that moment in time have

¹ The turnip, however, was by no means restricted to these areas, nor was the pumpkin unique to the United States. See Indesteege (2004) and Stendardo and Esposito (2000) for interesting case studies of Flanders and Italy.

elements which still survive today – mostly a sense of opening on to another supernatural world – other elements such as dressing up or the hollowed-out turnips which were a routine feature of Halloween celebrations in Scotland for most of the twentieth century are nowhere to be seen: myths of origin, it would seem, are by no means restricted to the religious sphere. Indeed, Halloween is presented here as primarily for adults rather than children, and as a result is more overtly “sexually charged” than its modern-day equivalent. Secondly, equally absent is any sense of Celtic origins: we are firmly in the culture of the Lowland Scots and their Germanic, rather than Celtic language.

Jenny Butler looks at the uses made of Halloween among Wiccans in the Republic of Ireland. What her ethnographic work shows clearly is that while many of those involved are well aware of the arguments against the pagan origins of Halloween, they value it for quite different reasons, primarily for the human and spiritual values mobilised around it. The commercial face of Halloween seems further away in this study than in any of the others offered in this book. In his fascinating account of Halloween in the Isle of Man of his childhood Doug Sandle traces the regional variations in its celebration even on such a small island, and how these have changed over time, eventually developing a compromise with more Americanised forms and contents.

In “Experiencing Halloween (2)” we offer five chapters which document and analyse the ways in which Halloween – in its Americanised form – has made inroads into the domestic culture of a wide range of European countries over the past two decades, these being Catalonia (Salvador Cardús), Germany (Lothar Mikos), Sweden (Jonas Frykman), Russia (Larisa Prokhorova) and the Netherlands (John Helsloot). The picture is an often complex one, and varies considerably from one country to the other, but it frequently combines entrenched opposition from vested cultural, religious, educational or even political interests mobilising discourses of defence of tradition and the safeguarding of authenticity, and a much more enthusiastic welcome from other sectors of the population eagerly supported by elements of both large and small-scale business for whom the battle lines are more consistently drawn along a discourse of fun versus its suppression. As always, Halloween can simultaneously offer a space which brings people together, while offering opportunities for the drawing of lines which serve to keep them apart.

“(Re)interpreting Halloween” focuses on the links between Halloween and tourism. The first two pieces are written by practitioners in the field of tourism from Scotland (Andrew Crummie and Gordon Prestoungrange from Prestonpans) and the United States (Alison D’Amario from the

Salem Witch Museum) engaged in the presentation of their local culture and history through issues related culturally (though not in any sense historically) to Halloween (in both cases issues relating to witchcraft). They deal not only with the opportunities offered by the link between Halloween and witchcraft, but also the pitfalls to be avoided and the potential consequences, both positive and negative, for their local community which can be momentarily transformed by the massive influx of tourists over the Halloween period. The third piece by Duncan Light concerns the marketing of Transylvania to western tourists exploiting the likewise purely conventional association of Halloween with vampires. It takes an ethnographic approach, comparing and contrasting their actual experience of the visit with the expectations they had brought with them on their arrival.

“(Re)presenting Halloween” offers a wide range of analyses of how Halloween is dealt with as a topic in the media, either in the form of news reporting (Anthea Irwin, Dejan Jontes and Hugh O’Donnell), in television fiction (Enric Castelló and Catriona Miller) and radio drama (Richard Hand). The countries covered are Catalonia, England, France, Slovenia and the United States and the approaches studied ranges from comedic engagement to supercilious dismissal. Whether the genre is serious or frivolous, whether the appeal is low or middle-brow (there appear to be no high-brow representations of Halloween), tensions abound as Halloween is mobilised as a resource in disputes regarding tradition and change, the domestic and the foreign, multiculturalism, cultural imperialism, the relationship between the sexes, even issues of law and order. Halloween constantly appears less as an activity in its own right than as a concept to be struggled over, that struggle itself “representing” larger contending forces in the background.

Conclusion

The conference dinner held on Halloween 2006 was attended by some rather unusual (though under the circumstances perhaps not entirely unexpected) guests. There was at least one Count Dracula (in an *alter ego* one of the editors of this book), a German Phantom, two extremely scary-looking Swedish witches and another two rather more benign ones, Canadian and Russian respectively. A severed hand was also doing the rounds, much to the delegates’ delight. Academics, it would seem, are also loath to miss an opportunity to have fun.



An unusual dinner party

The point is not a frivolous one, as our international group came to embody the complexities and contradictions of Halloween itself. For most of us our childhood was, er, some distance behind us, and only the tiniest minority came from those regions which can lay some kind of credible claim to be the source of at least some of the outward forms of Halloween celebrations today. Despite this, irrespective of our background or nationality, Halloween had gone from being the object of our serious academic endeavour during the day, to an excuse to dress up and have fun only a few hours later. In other words, it had brought us together in an atmosphere, as the photographs above clearly show, of unabashed enjoyment. Commercialism was present too – our disguises and props had been rented or purchased from a range of local outlets – as were links with real-life witchcraft as, before sitting down to dinner, we watched the play *The Cauldron* performed by the Port Seaton Amateur Dramatic Society, a play dealing with a particularly gruesome incident in the history of witchcraft in Scotland.

As our conference dinner suggested, the range of meanings produced by and generated around Halloween as a contemporary phenomenon is no doubt too great for any one volume to do adequate justice to. However, we hope this book goes some way towards recognising the importance of this event, to shedding new light on its every increasing complexity, and to encouraging new research in the future.

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FLEXIBLE HALLOWEEN: LONGEVITY, APPROPRIATION, MULTIPLICITY, AND CONTESTATION

JACK SANTINO

The celebration of Halloween is thriving today in the United States, and growing internationally, although this latter fact is the cause of concern among many. The current orthodoxy is that the contemporary Halloween celebration is a Christianized version of Samhain, an ancient Celtic festival of the dead and the new year. Samhain is certainly a precursor to Halloween historically, but the development of the modern celebration is multifaceted and draws on many various celebratory traditions and activities. Today in the United States Halloween is second only to Christmas in terms of the monies it generates among consumer industries; it is celebrated by people of all ages and backgrounds (with certain notable exceptions) and in all parts of the country. It has become economically important, yet the symbolism of the day is off-putting to many. Halloween is celebrated by children in masks and costumes, usually store-bought, “trick-or-treating” from home to home; in rural areas in the past and still it is an occasion for pranks, some of which can be quite dangerous (putting logs on a road, for instance) and at the least very annoying (peppering a house with kernels of corn, for example). Adults have joined the party in the cities, promenading in costumes (often homemade) along thoroughfares that become pedestrian malls, as participants display their creativity, mock convention, and satirize politicians. In many college and university towns, Halloween is the occasion for pub-crawling and large scale public partying.

There is, in the United States, a cultural ambivalence to Halloween. Various groups define it differently, and use it to different purposes. Industry, as mentioned above, has seized on the folk traditions of Halloween and commodified them. For instance, people have begun decorating the facades of the buildings they live and work in extensively for the autumn season and Halloween. As a result, department stores now offer mass-produced dummies to replace the homemade scarecrows that

people place in front of their homes. The result is that most assemblages of holiday decorations are a combination of homemade and mass-produced items (Santino 1986). Also, traditions are often “borrowed” from one holiday to another, such as the use of electric lights in decorative shapes and colors specific to the occasion. Christmas has long been a festival of lights, and Halloween has had its illuminated jack o’lanterns, but now Halloween is marked by strings of electric ghosts, pumpkins and witches garlanding doorways and window frames. This is more than a simple diffusion from one holiday to another; it is a purposeful introduction of a celebratory component to an occasion as a means of generating profits. It is an effort to create a consumer market for previously unknown and unneeded products. We are now seeing similar efforts by American industries internationally, although the dynamics of this process are more complicated than they appear. This article will be an initial attempt to delineate some of the variables involved in the importation of the American-style Halloween to markets other than the United States.

To say that Halloween is polysemic is an understatement. As mentioned above, people of different ages celebrate it differently, as do people in different regions, rural, urban, and suburban. The very designation of the day has varied over time and across space. In many places it is the night before Halloween (itself the eve of All Saints Day, November 1) that is known as Mischief Night, while the 31st of October is reserved for the house visits of trick-or-treating. October 30 is also known as Devils Night in some areas, and in the Detroit area it is the occasion for major arson—the setting on fire of literally hundreds of city buildings. This is done illegally, and every year the authorities promise to clamp down on it, but this drastic form of urban renewal (probably influenced by the riots of the 1960s) continues. Halloween is also known as Cabbage Night and Trick-or-Treat Night. Practitioners of neopagan and Wiccan religions confidently assert that they celebrate the ancient festival of Samhain as part of their religious heritage; many fundamentalist Christian groups denounce Halloween as diabolical. Latin Americans observe November 1 and 2, All Saints and All Souls Days, as the Days of the Dead, an occasion separate from but related to Halloween insofar as both are derived in part from the church’s saints’ days, both involve the merging of the church calendar with local folk tradition, and both involve the concept of death and its place in the nature of things.

There is no one “right way” to celebrate Halloween, but the holiday suggests inversion as a primary theme. Historically, Halloween has served in part as a seasonal marker, especially for agricultural and pastoral societies. Its symbolism reflects this connection to the harvest, with its

ubiquitous pumpkins and corn stalks. In addition, Halloween also is filled with images of death, primarily ghosts and skeletons. Perhaps this is an inheritance from the Celtic Samhain, during which festival the souls of the dead passed over from this world to the next. Perhaps it is simply a kind of cultural and social symbolic logic—harvest is itself death, and it is a necessary one to sustain life; Halloween reminds us that we too are a part of nature, and we too must pass away and make room for future generations (Santino 1983). Whatever the case, Halloween combines these images seamlessly. Furthermore, images of evil and malevolence are also central to Halloween. Again, speculation suggests that this is due to the reinterpretation of the Celtic feast by Christianity—as the church established November 1 as All Saints Day, the pre-Christian traditions and beliefs continued to be practised on the folk or popular level. The church would redefine these according to its dualistic cosmological view, and insist that any supernatural experience that contradicted church doctrine must be diabolical in origin. Thus, the attention to the afterlife and many of the spiritual components of the old Samhain were seen as evil. Hell, Satan, and his dominions entered into the feast. Those said to have aligned with Satan, such as witches, and eventually any malevolent creature, from vampires to Freddie Krueger, became appropriate Halloween imagery.

Thus, Halloween is an occasion for the public display of images of death, dying, the macabre, and the occult. As elaborate as these displays and costumes can be, there is a sense of fun to it all. Because it allows for taking out from under the bed the monsters and fears we all live with silently for the rest of the year, Halloween is a safe time to do this. Families who keep their front yards manicured and tidy, homes that suggest that nature has come totally under the control of culture, suddenly sport ghosts and gruesome effigies hanging from trees. And along with the traditional images we find contemporary fears as well. At the Halloween parade in New York, a massive street carnival, people's costumes have included tampered, poisoned consumer products, and even nuclear waste. Modern plagues take their place alongside the ancient.

So the day allows for overturning rules and roles in ways otherwise forbidden. This inversion is realized in many different ways. Individuals at street festivals may cross-dress, but since the mid-twentieth century transvestites have paraded in full drag on Halloween. In so doing, these individuals are using the occasion to present themselves in a way usually forbidden to them. Again, we can see here an instance of identity politics as well as a use of the opportunity to do what one is not otherwise allowed to do. Here, though, one is not merely cross-dressing as a joke, but instead

expressing an important sense of self: a real, but usually hidden, aspect of the self is now paraded publicly on Halloween.

Again, it is important to emphasize that, despite the fact that Halloween is celebrated throughout the US, and has been the target of major consumerist and commodification efforts over the past few decades, the celebration varies in its particulars from region to region, and among different population groups. Still, there has been a general movement since the 1970s toward increased carnivalization. Halloween had become primarily a children's occasion after the Second World War, and, while it is still thought of that way by many today, in the past several decades adults have increased their participation in the events of the day in a variety of ways. For instance, the decoration of homes has become increasingly elaborate, as jack o'lanterns have been joined by all manner of effigies, ghosts, witches, electric lights, coffins, false gravestones, and so on. The adults who accompany children in the rounds themselves often wear fancy dress, as do the people awarding the treats. Also, college students across the US use the occasion for street festivals (which can turn rowdy and often lead to some arrests). Moreover, older adults too have developed the public masquerade traditions. In Washington D.C., for instance, the Georgetown section of the city is home to the costuming of students from Georgetown University, while across town, families promenade along East Capitol Street. Another example is the Greenwich Village parade, famously elaborate, which is followed for many by the promenade along Christopher Street, which is largely gay. So we can demonstrate the emergence of Halloween as a kind of autumnal carnival in the US over the past several decades (Bakhtin 1968).

The reasons for this emergence are not obvious, but probably have to do with, among other factors, the aging of that same post-WWII generation who enjoyed Halloween in their youth and took it with them into their adult years. Also, the US does not otherwise have a nationally-celebrated carnivalesque event; Mardi Gras is actually celebrated only in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast area, with smaller celebrations among some French communities in northern New England. So there is a vacuum, of sorts, that Halloween fills. It should also be noted that despite the emphasis on Halloween as having derived from the Celtic Samhain, the influence on the American celebration of many different ethnic groups should not be overlooked. The carnivalesque Halloween that has emerged shows lineages with Mediterranean, African, and Central and South American festive events, from Carnival to saints day processions. Halloween in the US, then, has been changing and adapting for well over a century. Before World War II it was celebrated with parties in the home; it

then became a masked solicitation ritual, and is now an inversive, large-scale public festival.

By contrast, Halloween in Northern Ireland, while it features its share of disruptive license, is in many ways fundamentally different from its US counterpart. The analogue to trick-or-treating is Halloween rhyming, wherein young people go door-to-door. Unlike the American trick-or-treating, which is done on a specific night at a prescribed time, rhyming can be done weeks in advance of Halloween. The same children may return to the same residence more than once over the weeks leading up to Halloween, and the resident may turn them away without giving them anything. Traditionally, there is more of an actual performance required than in the United States (although the term “trick-or-treat” has begun to be used); fruits, nuts, or the more desired money is the gift, not sweets as in the US. The money usually goes to buying fireworks of various kinds. Again, in contrast to the US, fireworks are a major component to the Northern Irish Halloween. Firecrackers, or “bangers,” are part of young male culture during the season, and one hears their explosions intermittently at this time of year. Families arrange firework displays in their gardens, and cities and towns sponsor official fireworks displays. In fact, explosives have been banned in Northern Ireland due to the paramilitary activities there, but fireworks are sold openly on the street. Like fireworks, the traditional Halloween bonfire is found both at private residences and at public land operated by the local city governments. Rhyming does not occur on Halloween itself; that night is devoted to tending these various fire events, as well as attending family dinners, and visiting with friends and relatives. In this regard, food traditions are important to Halloween, and the gender division is reflected in the role of females as preparers of the feast, and males as overseers of the outdoor feasts.

Halloween in Northern Ireland reveals upon inspection an interesting hybridity. Many of the customs associated with it, particularly the fireworks displays, along with burning effigies known as “Guys” on the bonfires, appear to have been adapted from the British Guy Fawkes Night celebration, which is November 5. Northern Ireland is a small political entity comprised of six counties in northeastern Ireland, and its population is famously divided among those who consider themselves British (the majority) and those who consider themselves Irish. These identities reflect very deep historical issues and events, and have led to enormous political strife. Halloween is one of the few national occasions that both groups participate in. Interestingly, this celebration seems to have been open enough, flexible enough, polysemic and multivocal enough, to allow for

the successful melding of traditions of both groups in a single, uncontested celebration (Santino 1998).

The larger point for the argument of this essay is that Halloween has developed in significantly different ways in Northern Ireland and the United States. The occasion retains root metaphors of season, harvest, and death, but the practices in each locality reflect variables of history and context. Not only does Halloween in Northern Ireland retain its sense of importance in the annual calendar (it is a major feast day), and it retains more overtly than the US its relationship to the harvest (more similar to the American Thanksgiving in some regards), but it also mediates between at least two demographic groups who otherwise are often at odds over the uses and interpretations of traditions and symbols (Santino 2000; Jarman 1997; Buckley 1998). In the US, Halloween has in many places developed into street theatre. Among the many appealing aspects of this is the opportunity it allows for satire and topicality. For instance, unpopular politicians and celebrities who have been shown to have feet of clay are often mocked, and as we have seen, current issues are often satirized. Symbols are well-known and understood to be multivalent (Turner 1967); it is important to remember that customary, performative traditions are also symbolic. Halloween has many such components, and any or all of them have the potential to be used in a number of different ways. What began as a form of mumming—trick-or-treating—has developed into large-scale urban street festivals, and these in turn use the inversion inherent in the occasion as an opportunity to seize not only space (the street), but also the public discourse, and to comment on issues such as the sex scandals in the Catholic church, the lack of any weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, or George W. Bush's presidency generally.

Currently we are witnessing the exportation of American-style Halloween to nations throughout Europe. Some of this is a result of the widespread broadcast of American television programs, especially children's programming such as *Sesame Street*. A great deal of it is initiated by consumer industries intending to create new markets. How successful these efforts will be remains to be seen. As is the case in Mexico, in Europe it is often the case that cultural gatekeepers denounce these importations as foreign, inauthentic, and even Satanic. These pronouncements do not necessarily stop the populace from adopting the customs, however. American culture is appealing to many, though appalling to some. Questions I would consider in the study of Halloween internationally would include whether a country in question had a tradition already of observing either All Saints Day or All Souls Day (for many countries November 1 is a major national occasion, one that usually

involves cleaning, decorating, and visiting the graves of deceased family members). Do such traditions make people more or less likely to accept the American Halloween? Are countries with no analogous autumn celebration more open to the acceptance of a new one? If the American Halloween makes inroads, how exactly is it celebrated? By whom? And, importantly, what meanings are attached to it by its participants? It may be that the older levels of death and the harvest are irrelevant, and the appeal is entirely due to its novelty and its association with the United States. Do different countries and regions adapt it to their own cultural worldview?

Halloween is amorphous enough that it can accommodate a wide range of uses and inscribed meanings. Still, it is specific enough—to the coming year's end, and in the Northern hemisphere, to coming winter; to issues of human mortality; to the possibility of playing with our fears—that it has a broad appeal. How this will be realized in a global economic and cultural situation is the research task before us.

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PART I:
(RE)INVENTING HALLOWEEN

THE HALLOWEEN FEAST

STEPHEN SAYERS

We should be grateful for the publication in October 2000 of Martin Walsh's article "Medieval English Martinmesse: The Archaeology of a Forgotten Festival", because in it he not only restores to consciousness a forgotten, or at least an overlooked, aspect of folklore but also he provides us with an opportunity to extend our understanding of it.

Walsh identifies Martinmas as a medieval and early modern feast held annually on 11th November, and sometimes on succeeding days, throughout much of Britain and in Western Europe. In his skilful archaeology, Walsh describes Martinmas as "the last harvest festival" and as "the winter threshold feast". He characterises it as a time of bonfires (though not in England), meat-eating, drunkenness, storytelling, revelling and "perambulations of mummers and female carolling groups". He links the event to the celebration of the end of harvest and with eating the meat of animals that had been slaughtered and salted down for winter provision. In England this was traditionally "Martlemas beef", but often the poor made do with pork from pigs that had been fattened at this time of year on acorns and apples from the orchards. Much of the meat from the slaughtering would not keep and so sausages, white puddings, black puddings, suet puddings, brawn and chitterlings were traditional fare. It was a time for saying farewell to itinerant ploughmen and to have them share the feast, along with the butchers, slaughterers and other labourers involved with what the historian Gwyn Williams used to call in his York lectures "the tyranny of the harvest". Indeed, Morris (1892, 225-226) refers to East Riding (of Yorkshire) ploughmen or "*plew-lads*" as being "well fed" and "as fine and well developed a race as one can see anywhere". It was also the time for drinking new wines. In general, it was "an ushering in of the winter revelling season".

Walsh goes on to account for the demise and eventual disappearance of the feast. Improvements in agriculture meant winter fodder became more plentiful and so the slaughter of animals in November was no longer quite so extensive. The Reformation and Industrial Revolution took their toll, as did the contiguous Guy Fawkes celebrations on Bonfire Night and the growing importance of Christmas as a time of celebration.

Walsh also hints at, but does not emphasise, the role of the Church in curbing the excesses of the feast. But we know from elsewhere that this was the case. For example, the Council of Auxerre in 578 tried to abolish feasting at Martinmas because it was becoming excessive. The fact that this was done so early in the history of Christianised Europe might indicate that the Martinmas feast could have much earlier origins. Indeed, Walsh alludes to this. He says (2000, 247): “English Martinmas may well have had very deep roots in the aboriginal past” and “The saint’s position in the liturgical calendar apparently did coincide with other, older and deeper calendars, allowing him to sink, as it were, into the realm of Faerie and rule over at least its outer province, the Land of Cockaigne”.

However, Walsh does not explore the obvious question: why did the Church dedicate this time of year to St Martin of Tours? Shirley Toulson (1987, 39) thinks she knows why. She says that the Emperor Maximus loved St Martin, who had served with distinction in the Roman army, as his father had done before him. The saint had become the patron saint of soldiers and, therefore, it was easy to see why he should be held in such regard by the newly Christianised Romans. Toulson links Martinmas to the Roman Feast of Jupiter that was celebrated until the fourth century AD—the same century in which St Martin flourished. The feast spanned the same two weeks occupied by St Martin’s activities in mid-November and was marked by a great feast—the *epulum Iovis*—Plebeian games, the reading of auguries and drinking. However, Toulson overlooks another aspect of St Martin’s *curriculum vitae*. He was widely known and admired for being the hammer of pagans. His name was associated with *conversion* and his methods of conversion included smashing shrines, temple-torching, the felling of sacred trees and exorcisms. Martin sometimes borrowed troops from the Roman army to help him with his work. So it is that the name of St Martin brought not only Christian respectability to a pagan feast in November, but also, indubitably, it affirmed Roman hegemony.

So it is arguable that the Christian feast of Martinmas had a pagan Roman origin which was associated with *inter alia* obtaining the blessing of Jupiter to secure a bountiful outcome at the occasion of the first ploughing and planting. This usually takes place as soon as the harvest is gathered in. In other words, it is a liminal event. It comes at the end of one season of growth and at the start of a new one. Of course, the natural histories of these festivals differ. The Roman feast is primarily of an agricultural nature and Martinmas is primarily of a pastoral one. But they do have sufficient congruence to make their conflation successful.

Whilst the Feast of Jupiter might have been observed by elements of those Romans who were occupying Roman colonies, it is doubtful whether it was widely observed by the occupied populations themselves. Even given what Tacitus referred to as the “interpretatio romana”—the process of Romanising non-Roman deities—it is doubtful whether, as Julius Caesar claims in his *Gallic Wars*, the transcendent god amongst the Celts was Dis Pater (or Pluto) or even, since Max Muller (1885, 626-650), that it was Jupiter himself, in the guise of Zeus Pater. At best, the colonised population might have acknowledged the Roman feast as well as their own, but it is doubtful whether they would have acknowledged it *instead* of their own.

It is entirely possible however, that many of the festivals that take place at this time of year in the northern hemisphere (or at least those parts of the northern hemisphere where climate determines that the agricultural or pastoral cycles are broadly similar) are related in some way and are perhaps even cognate with some earlier festal activity. Whitlock (1978, 145) has no doubt about this. In a purely British context, he suggests that Martinmas, Bonfire Night and Halloween are cognates of the pre-Roman feast of Samhain. We might add to this list. Unlikely as it may sound, Armistice Day (and in Britain its successor, Remembrance Sunday) could be included. Most modern texts refer to Remembrance Sunday as a new festival in Britain to honour the dead of two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. Typically, these suggest that the date of 11th November is simply fortuitous in that it marks the last day of conflict in the First World War in 1918. However, the politicians who brokered the cessation of conflict at that time must have known that the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month was the time when traditionally, in Germany, the Martinmas feast—a time of light and hope and celebration after the travails of the pastoral year—began with the lighting of fires. It was therefore mythologically resonant and consequently, it was deemed to be a politically expedient time to mark the event.

It is perhaps appropriate here to comment about the currently fashionable tendency amongst folklorists to be dismissive about claims describing cognatic links between seasonal festivities. For example, Ronald Hutton (1996, 394) refers to twentieth century folklorists speaking confidently, but mistakenly, about the fires of Bonfire Night being descended directly from pagan ritual. However, he does not dispute that Halloween fires were lit in North and mid-Wales, the Isle of Man and Central Scotland. Walsh points out that Martinmas fires were lit in Germany, Holland and elsewhere during the Middle Ages. So to acknowledge that fires were lit at this season of the year in various places

throughout Europe is not contentious, but it does imply a festal provenance that is distinctly other than the historic events that took place in London in 1605. In recent times, it has become fashionable to interpret some folkloric phenomena as “new” rather than “old”. This is quite understandable. In part this tendency should be seen as a reaction against the excessive claims made by Frazer and others of his ilk to the effect that many modern festivals had ancient roots. But it is also a reaction against New Age practitioners who all too often claim the same thing. The embarrassment that is evident in folklorists when faced by pagans is of the same order as the embarrassment that is evident in astronomers when faced by astrologers. Nevertheless, to anyone “not defending a thesis”, as Aristotle would say, it is likely that Bonfire Night fires do have their origins in earlier ceremonial fires. Thomas Gwynn Jones (1979, 147) suggests this when he recalls the days of his youth in mid-nineteenth century rural Wales, when huge efforts went into gathering materials for the Winter’s Eve bonfire, yet in those same country districts “the name of Guy Fawkes was unknown”. Trefor Owen (1968, 140-141) refers to Griffith Jones’s (1871) survey of festivals in Llansanffraith in Montgomeryshire to make the point that in the middle of the nineteenth century no reference was made to Guy Fawkes bonfires on November 5th. On the other hand, the Winter’s Eve bonfire was described in some detail. He also refers to a letter by William Morris of Anglesey dated 1758 in which he writes that, for the first time in that year, the bonfire had taken place on the new Winter’s Eve instead of the old one.

Sometimes folklorists can be too specific about dates. They tend to think of time in terms of linear time—that which has come down to us from Zarathustra via Judaism and Christianity, and which has been subsequently mediated by the use of the pendulum clock and by the Statutes (Definition of Time) Act of 1880. Their perception is of what might be termed “ordinal time”, or that conception of time that is specific, uniform and progressive. Earlier generations would have been more familiar with “seasonal time”, or that conception of time that is vague, inconsistent and recurring. This disparity can produce misunderstandings of early folkloric phenomena and especially from the perspective of modern folklorists who are caught up in a quite different experience of time. Although early cultures were clearly adept at calculating the precise date of festivals, it is likely that their calculation by seasonal time would have been achieved by something like the first appearance in some specified place of The Pleiades or Orion in the night sky.

But in any case, we are dealing here with a *seasonal* festival. The Calendar of Coligny indicates that *Samonios* or Samhain was not a day,

but three days, or more correctly, three nights. Ronald Hutton (1996, 361) refers to the twelfth century *Serglige Con Culaind* to make the point that “the *feis* of [Samhain of] the Ulaid (Ulstermen) lasted ‘the three days before Samuin and the three days after Samuin itself.’” Christina Hole (1976, 126) cites an “old Scots rhyme” that was sung at Halloween that makes the point in a different way: “*This is Hallovan, The Morn is Halladay, Nine free Nights till Martinmas, An’ sune they’ll wear away*”.

This makes sense, given that all the activities associated with Samhain—bringing animals down from their summer pastures; butchering and preserving meat; not to mention the gatherings of extended kin, feasting, drinking, boasting, wrestling, divination and other ritual activities—would require several days to accomplish. Indeed, it could be likened to Christmas festivities in modern times, where the holiday is marked by a specific day, but is distinctly seasonal in its observation. It is also significant that Bede refers to the month of November as “*Blod-monath*”, ‘blood month’ or the month of blood letting.

The idea of a festal season of Samhain is also suggested by the history of Papal calendrical edicts. It is clear that the St Martin’s Day feast had not been sufficient to absorb and sanctify the pre-Christian inclination to revelry at this time of year. Pope Gregory IV saw fit to relocate All Saints Day from 21st February (the date of the Roman *Feralia*, the Festival of the Dead) to 1st November in 837 AD. Various official reasons have been given for this, including the claim that it was difficult to feed pilgrims in Rome, who came to honour the souls of Christian martyrs, because in February winter supplies would be dwindling, but in November, when the harvest had been gathered in, this would not prove to be such a problem. If the argument about scarcity is accepted, one might observe—cynically perhaps—that this would suggest a good reason for keeping the feast where it was. During times of scarcity prices are high and Rome and its merchants (including the Church) would have had a powerful economic incentive to maintain the *status quo* and not to change it.

Brian Day (2000, 161) has another view about the change of dates. He thinks it was done simply to disguise Samhain, which was itself concerned *inter alia* with the role of the dead amongst the living. Jean Markale (2000, 89) makes an interesting point when he suggests that it was the influence of Irish clerics as advisors to Pope Gregory III that began this process. They would know more than most people about the grip of Samhain on western populations. Their concerns would imply that Martinmas was not able to absorb all aspects of Samhain, especially its reference to the dead, and that another Christian inception was required. Given the spacing of the dates of All Saints and Martinmas, it is not